

Investigation of the Wallowa Mountains snow avalanche climate

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The Wallowa Avalanche Center's first year of operation (2009/10) has lead to an interest in determining and/or verifying the snow avalanche climate of the Wallowa Mountain Range. Until recently there has been no formal avalanche hazard dissemination for the general public within the Wallowa Mountains of northeast Oregon. Additionally, there has been no routine daily meteorological or avalanche related recordkeeping within this mountainous region to the best of the authors' knowledge. In fact, no commercial ski resorts or highway snow safety study plots exist in this area to broaden the database. The supporting data analyzed incorporates a combination of SNOTEL stations, commercial outfitter and guide records, Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS) and National Weather Service (NWS) records. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected from these sources over the previous 15 years. The analysis compares similarly acquired datasets from the Wasatch Range for consistency. The use of existing methodology and snow avalanche classification schemes places this region in the Intermountain climate. However, this investigation suggests the snow avalanche climate is a combination of Intermountain and Coastal/Continental.